5

Planning for Social Studies Instruction

Teacher planning is necessary to increase student learning. Planning is also necessary to meet the wide range of abilities and diversity among our students. Good planning helps to achieve good classroom management for effective student learning. Traditional curriculum planning of units and lesson plans includes standards/objectives, activities to achieve the objectives, and assessments to evaluate if objectives have been achieved. In contrast, the backward design starts with the desired results and assessment evidence. Chapter topics are organized from the general, broad planning to specific daily lesson plans.

- Planning
- Goals, Long-Range Planning, and Standards/Instructional Objectives
- Treasury of Resources and Technology for Planning
- Units
- Lesson Plans

Why is it helpful to plan with another teacher?

From *Elementary Social Studies: A Practical Guide*, 7/e. June R. Chapin.
Copyright © 2009 by Pearson Education. All rights reserved.

Planning

A teacher is the key to the social studies program. In their role as **decision makers,** teachers decide on what units to include during the year or what tomorrow's lesson plan will be. Planning is especially important to meet the needs of all our students in the **inclusive classroom.** Thought-out planning is better than decisions made on the spot. If you do not know what to do next, the classroom experience can be very frustrating for both you and your students. Lack of planning can waste time and also create class management problems. In contrast, thinking about what you are going to do can contribute to student learning.

Good planners actively seek materials. You should systematically build your own collection or library of resources for teaching social studies. Continue this throughout your teaching career. Having a variety of unit plans and instructional resources for students will pay dividends. Organize your collection under standards, themes, or categories so that you can retrieve your resources as you need them.

Successful planning needs to be detailed enough to help you organize what actually happens in the classroom. It is inaccurate to suggest that only drudges and drones plan; planning is a vital and basic skill for all effective teachers. Research indicates that teachers who plan are more likely to be satisfied with their teaching and are more likely to remain in the teaching profession. Careful and flexible planning makes you a professional who builds on students' backgrounds and experiences.

On Your Own 2.1

Your Concept of Planning

Concept maps are useful ways of organizing ideas. Jot down the words *teacher planning* in the center of a sheet of paper. Think of the various subtopics such as lesson or books. Now try drawing the relationships you see among the topics. Compare your concept map of teacher planning with the maps of others in your class. ●

Busy Teachers

Sometimes elementary schoolteachers resist planning, especially writing out their plans, because they are so busy with immediate responsibilities—filling out forms, grading papers, checking homework. Planning is often a low-priority task. But there is an important psychological benefit to planning and especially to working out and writing down daily lesson plans: confidence. With a plan in front of you, you feel organized and prepared to face the class. A plan a day keeps disaster away. Planning can often help you anticipate management problems in the classroom, and it enables you to have better control of the situation. As the old saying goes, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Some teachers argue that planning encourages rigidity. Having a written plan, they suggest, prevents them from taking advantage of unexpected instructional opportunities. Serendipity is always welcome! Your lesson plan, however, is meant to be a guide, not a prison sentence. Always be ready to bend it to take advantage of student interest or some recent and unanticipated event.

Value of Written Lesson Plans

Writing out lesson plans helps you to better remember what is supposed to happen since you have used multiple senses in writing the lesson plan.

You may find that you have no choice about writing out lesson plans. Some school districts and principals require teachers to submit lesson plans for the coming week throughout the year. Frequently, administrators ask only for brief statements of topics and textbook pages to be covered. Most plans written for administrators show very little detail. Written lesson plans are valuable to administrators if they need a substitute teacher for you or if there ever is a parent who challenges what you are teaching. The fact that a lesson plan must be submitted, however, acts as an incentive for many elementary teachers to plan ahead, if only to list the subject areas they will cover in a given week. Writing in topics under subject-area headings—science, social studies, math—may suggest areas of potential integration: How can language arts or science work with this week's social studies lessons?

There are often differences between what is listed on the plan handed in to an administrator and what actually goes on in the classroom. Some differences are inevitable, since lesson plans should always allow for flexibility. In a few cases, subjects are listed that are never taught. Frequently, this happens because the teacher does no planning in depth and, therefore, has no real plan to implement.

The Reflective Teacher

Sometimes a new teacher will say, "I did a lot of planning for a lesson on our local transportation system, and the whole thing fell flat. But the next day I walked in 'cold' and taught a terrific lesson on neighborhoods. So why plan?" This can happen. Planned lessons do not always go as well as expected. Instead of abandoning planning, however, you should go over an unsuccessful lesson at the end of the day, when you are less emotionally involved. At what points did it go off track? Were the students bored? Unable to keep up? Confused? What actually was wrong with the lesson? Make notes on your lesson plan to help you with future planning. Using a word processor for your lesson plans is ideal because you can easily revise them. In effect, you are **reflecting** on your teaching, a highly approved method to improve your teaching.

Even if a lesson *is* successful, you should critique your written plan. What would have made the lesson better? Write down proposed changes so that you won't forget them. Having both the original plan and your notes on how to improve it will provide you with an ever-expanding resource file in years to come.

Now more emphasis is on teachers sharing and collaborating with their colleagues. The whole school now works together to improve test scores. A teacher shares data from a lesson, and other teachers reflect on the lesson in a supportive manner. This is called *lesson study,* a professional development approach credited to Japan. Sharing teachers' work and expertise can improve student learning. Teachers gain knowledge of subject matter, instruction, and capacity to observe students.

Getting Started: Locating Resources

How do you go about planning? First assemble all available planning tools and resources. They include the following:

- Social studies state framework and standards along with district curriculum guides (standards for language arts and other subject areas may also be useful)

Small Group Work 2.1

Issues That Affect Social Studies Planning

Some of the many issues in curriculum planning that teachers must consider are meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population, using technology in the classroom, and improving test scores. Note if these issues apply to where you are teaching or are expecting to teach. ●

- Mandated social studies test requirements (if any)
- Your adopted textbook, the teacher's guide, and ancillary materials
- Media catalogs for your district and county
- Recommendations from your school media specialist (usually your librarian) for stories, trade books, reference books, map and globe collections
- Computer resources including virtual field trips, WebQuests, lesson plans from the Internet, and simulations
- Ideas from other teachers in your school
- Parent resources
- Community resources, guest speakers, field trips, and local newspapers
- Information on the backgrounds and abilities of your diverse students
- A school calendar (essential for holidays, changes in schedule)

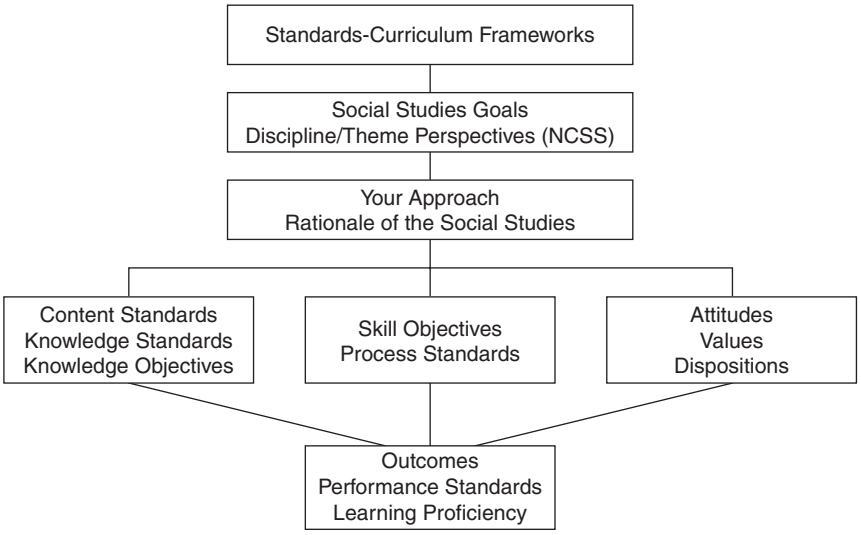
Once your resources are assembled, you are better able to see your options. Then you can choose units and activities for which you have appropriate materials and which you think will interest your students and be appropriate for their backgrounds. Try to choose a program that fits your abilities and talents. A lack of interest on your part will surely be conveyed to your students. However, do not ignore your state standards.

Goals, Long-Range Planning, and Standards/Instructional Objectives

Let us now go through the process of planning a social studies curriculum following the outline in Figure 2.1. *First, read carefully the standards or curriculum framework of your state and local district.* These documents are published by your state education agency and/or your local school district. Then look at the framework's **goals,** which are the broad statements of desired outcomes.

Promoting good citizenship, which is often found on district lists of educational goals, is also generally listed as a goal for social studies education. The social studies program does not have sole responsibility for teaching citizenship skills; other areas of the curriculum also contribute. But an elementary social studies program should be designed to do as much as possible to move students toward effective citizenship participation (see Chapter 8). As an elementary teacher, you will plan the entire day or most of the

Figure 2.1 The Curriculum Planning Process



day for your students. In looking over the day's program, you will want to be alert to those activities that best promote both broad educational goals and specific goals of the social studies.

In Chapter 1, we mentioned the four basic social studies goals:

1. To acquire **knowledge** from the social sciences, history, and humanities
2. To develop **skills** to think and to process information
3. To develop appropriate democratic **values** and **attitudes**
4. To have opportunities for **citizenship/social participation**

In some states, instead of the term *goal, essential questions, guiding questions, fundamental questions,* or *overarching understandings* is used. These interchangeable terms identify what is to be learned at a broad level. Regardless of the terms used, almost all districts have some set of general goals (lifelong learning skills and habits, health, responsible behavior at school, etc.) as well as goals for certain subjects.

These goals provide the framework for planning in the social studies and also fit easily into the general goals of most states and school districts. In some cases, the Ten Themes of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) or the goals and standards of the separate social science/history disciplines might be included because they often list the key discipline concepts on which the social studies curriculum should focus.

The problem with goals is that they are so broadly stated that any social activity you plan to teach could be listed under at least one of them. Goals are useful in defining broad objectives but they lack the specificity necessary for effective day-to-day teaching.

Long-Range Planning

What are the next steps in planning after you have gathered and skimmed over your resources and looked at goals? Most elementary teachers begin social studies planning by roughing out an outline of the entire curriculum. Given the number of weeks in the school year, how would you divide the subject matter normally covered in, say, the fifth grade using standards? See how a fifth-grade teacher using California's standards could broadly block out a year's work (Figure 2.2). In general, the teacher in Figure 2.2 used about one month for each of the major standards. Note that in Chapter 1 the California grade two standards (p. 17) are organized into five major standards. For broad long-range planning, a teacher could decide that she might want to spend three months on Standard 2.5 on heroes but only one month or so on Standard 2.3 on governmental institutions and practices. Or the teacher could decide to spend approximately two months of each of the five standards. What would be the most important ideas or concepts? What would make reasonable, manageable sections?

Many teachers when planning for the year like to make a list under the three headings of Social Studies, Language Arts, and Science. As they think about the months of September and October, they see if correlations offer any possibilities such as literature selections or science experiments. As teachers do monthly planning, they again see if other subject areas can be correlated with standards, learning activities, and resources.

As you do this, your own approach or rationale to the social studies comes into play, whether it is conscious or not (Chapter 1). Teachers' personal beliefs as liberals and conservatives also influence their teaching. This affects how you make some decisions: Will you select only certain units from the textbook, or will you try to cover all of them? Will you use the district's curriculum guidelines, or will some of your units be from specific curriculum packages—an economic unit on choices, perhaps? Once you begin to make these basic determinations—what you will cover and how much time you will devote to each topic—you can focus your attention on the individual chunks of time, frequently called **units,** the main divisions of the curriculum. Long-range planning is vital because there is usually far more content (and resource material) available than there is time to teach it. By making these tentative choices, you are now doing long-range planning.

Figure 2.2 Broad Long-Range Planning Using California's Standards

Month	Grade 5—The Nine Standards for Making a New Nation
September	5.1 Native Americans—major pre-Columbian settlements
October/Nov.	5.2 Early explorers and explorations of the Americas
December	5.3 Cooperation/conflict among American Indians, settlers, Europe
January	5.4 Colonial life—political, religious, social, economic institutions
February/March	5.5 & 5.6 Causes and consequences of the American Revolution
April	5.7 Development and significance of the Constitution
May	5.8 Colonization, immigration, and settlement patterns, 1789 to 1850
June	5.9 Location of 50 states and names of their capitals; review

The Textbook

Textbook use increases as children advance from one grade to the next. We include the adopted textbook as a prime resource for instructional planning, acknowledging and agreeing with the criticisms leveled at textbook-centered teaching. In our view, a good program needs structure and topical direction. Most textbooks provide this. Taking advantage of the content outline, activities suggested, and enrichment ideas need not condemn you to a rigid chapter-by-chapter, lesson-by-lesson coverage. Instead of thinking of the text as a novel to be read from beginning to end, we need to see the text as a tool to help us conceptualize and speed up our long-range planning. If you use the textbook as your main guide in long-range curriculum planning, you should typically follow these steps:

1. Skim the text, looking at broad unit titles. Decide which ones you will use. (The author's recommendations about how much time a unit will typically take may be helpful.)
2. Decide which units will receive major emphasis or minor emphasis.
3. Examine the teacher's guide. Look for activities for you and your students.
4. Find other activities to supplement the text. The teacher's guide may suggest some; the publisher may also provide other materials, such as literature books.
5. Decide whether you will use the tests supplied by the publisher for evaluation.

What you are doing at this stage of the game is thinking about what you want students to gain in content, skills, and values. There should be challenging subject content that aims at higher-level thinking. This necessity forces us to consider sound education practices for the age group we are teaching. Normally we want high student involvement with a connection to real life. In addition, to show us that they have achieved these goals, we have to plan assessments as an ongoing process, integrated with instruction, as well as at the end of the unit.

Adjust to Promote Student Learning

Because a major part of your long-range planning will be done early in the school year or even before it begins, you probably won't know your students' full range of talents and abilities. Once you begin to learn more about your students, you will need to modify the learning activities in your curriculum to fit your classroom, where student abilities may range from those of students with disabilities to the gifted. Following constructionist ideas, you will want to find out your students' prior knowledge. What do they already know about a topic or idea and what do they want to learn about it? Some teachers involve students in planning what is to be learned.

Remember always that the purpose of planning is not to just focus on the teacher but *to promote student learning*. In other words, this makes every teacher's planning and classroom unique. You as the teacher, your students,

On Your Own 2.2

Facilitate Child-Focused Planning

Interview three students—a high-achieving student, an average student, and a struggling student. Ask what teaching approaches they like and which seem to help them most. ●

and your school are all influences on your planning. Consider your students' motivation and prior knowledge. In addition, your school's staff, parent, and community involvement are affecting your planning, as well as your own values, background, experiences, content knowledge, teaching methods, and classroom management.

Content Standards and Instructional Objectives

Whereas a *goal* is a broad statement of purpose, **content standard** or **instructional objective** is a specific accomplishment that you want your students to achieve in a specific period. Often the terms *knowledge objective, knowledge standard, standard, content standard,* and *instructional objective* are used interchangeably. The standards movement has greatly increased the number of educational terms because states often have used different terms.

You know that a well-written objective specifies the level of acceptable performance and the conditions under which a student must perform. Typically, objectives are focused on specific content mastery or skills that are more easily measured or evaluated. Many teacher education programs advise their students to use Bloom's taxonomy. For many state standards the objectives are listed but without the level of acceptable performance necessary on the part of the students.

The objectives approach affirms that it is not enough to love and nurture children. It is not enough to have fun activities. The teacher needs to guide students toward learning objectives. You are no doubt familiar with the traditional process of curriculum planning. Typically, there are three main questions to answer:

1. What are your standards or objectives?
2. What learning experiences will be used to achieve the desired objectives?
3. What evaluation procedures will be used to determine whether the objectives have been achieved?

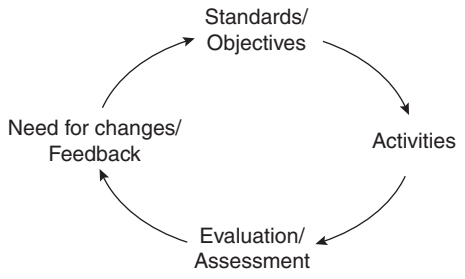
You hear the term **alignment** more often. Pleas are made to teachers to align classroom instruction to the state/district standards in methods, materials, and assignments. Administrators want to ensure that all students are developing the knowledge and skills needed to meet the standards. In many cases, professional development is provided to help teachers in this process. This may reflect the desire to have higher test scores.

There is now also more attention given to the goal that objectives, instruction, and evaluation should all be connected or coordinated with each other. This is called **curriculum alignment**—meaning that both instruction and evaluation should be based on the objectives. Poor alignment can occur because of various circumstances—for example, when the objective is improved thinking skills but the learning activities do not involve the students in thinking, or when the objective is improved thinking but the students are tested with low-level factual questions that do not assess their thinking skills.

Examples of Alignment

As an example of the instructional cycle in Figure 2.3 for the primary grades your **objectives** in a law-related education/civic education unit would be:

Figure 2.3 Instructional Cycle



- To understand the need for rules and laws
- To understand the need for fair consequences for inappropriate behavior
- To develop rules appropriate in a given situation

Your activity to accomplish these objectives is to read *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (any of the many versions) to the class. As an introduction to the story, have students make a sad face on one side of a paper plate. Tell them that you are going to read the story *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* and that they should raise a sad face each time Goldilocks does something they believe she should not do.

As you read the story, you notice that many children do not raise a sad face (the assessment) when Goldilocks does something wrong, such as entering someone's house without permission, breaking the chair, sleeping on the bed, and running away without an apology. This assessment/feedback alerts you to the fact that perhaps some of the students enjoy the charm of this old classic, especially as you change your voice for the three bears' dialogue, but they really do not understand the need for rules and laws.

This assessment/feedback leads you to engage the students in a discussion, listing on the board what Goldilocks did wrong and why it is wrong. Ask students to suggest a fair penalty for each wrong action. Should Goldilocks's parents be involved? Does the fact that Goldilocks was hungry and tired excuse her actions?

As another activity, you might as an extension read another classic, *Jack and the Beanstalk.* Again ask if Jack did anything wrong. Has the giant done anything wrong? Discuss what has happened from the giant's point of view. Again the instructional cycle is repeated with the same objectives and the same activities of reading the story and discussion, with evaluation of students' responses to see if they truly understand the objectives. As another activity you could also discuss a variety of situations on "What's Fair." Some of these could be experiences from your own students. You could also ask the students to give a report card grade (A to F) on how good the characters were. You would then make an assessment based on students' responses to see if further changes in the curriculum were needed. Perhaps the objectives need to be modified if students still do not see that Goldilocks or other characters did anything wrong. New objectives would be formulated based on the previous feedback. Or you could conclude that the objectives for your students had been achieved.[1]

Evaluation/assessment should be both aligned and an integral part of the learning experience (see Figure 2.3). It may occur during a given day's lesson. If assessment is embedded within a lesson, students receive immediate feedback and can better understand that testing is part of learning and that it is to their advantage to recognize their strengths and weaknesses.

[1]The activity described was adapted from *Goldilocks, The Trial,* video and leader's manual (Maryland State Bar Association, 1990).

Table 2.1 Comparison of Traditional versus Standards-Based Planning

Traditional Practice	Standards-Based Practice
Formulate objectives	Select standard(s) that students need to know and skills are needed
Design instructional activities; what resources will I need?	Design an assessment that allows each student to demonstrate what he/she knows or can do
Plan and give an assessment; often summative assessment	Design appropriate learning activities with resources needed for all students to achieve the standard
Check to see if objectives have been reached; if necessary reteach, modify next lesson or unit	Give assessment(s); use rubrics
Give grades to students	Use data from assessment to give feedback, reteach, or move to a higher level of the standard or a new standard

Backward Design

A more innovative approach is to turn the traditional planning model upside down into the standards-based practice (simplified in Table 2.1). This model, often called backward design or planning, is based on the work of Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe in *Understanding by Design* (UbD).[2] It calls for delaying the planning of classroom activities until the goals have been clarified and assessments designed. Thus, the three main stages in this model are as follows:

1. Desired results (big idea, enduring understandings, essential questions)
2. Assessment evidence (how will students demonstrate what they have learned or can do)
3. Learning activities (what opportunities will the student have to learn)

Examples of Using the Standards-Based Practice or Backward Design Approach

After an overview of your state's framework and standards, you need to clarify what a given standard really means for teaching and student learning. This is sometimes called unlocking or unpacking the standard. Let's see how this would work, breaking it down into

[2]Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design,* 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2005). This expanded edition includes the Wiggins & McTighe first edition (1998) as well as other supplementary materials.

steps. Assume that for your third grades you have chosen the following standards from West Virginia's history objectives for grade three:

Students will:

SS.3.5.3 compare and contrast present cultures to the cultures of people of other historical time periods (e.g., source of food, clothing, shelter, products used)

SS.3.5.4 make historical inferences by analyzing artifacts and pictures.

These standards or closely related standards are found in almost all state standards. For example, Colorado State Standards for Student Learning include the following:

History

- Describe the economic reasons why people move to or from a location (for example, explorers, nomadic people, miners, traders).
- Recognize the presence, interactions, and contributions of various groups and culture have affected the school, neighborhood, community, and states.

Geography

- Identify the causes of human migration.
- Identify the factors that affect where people settle.
- Identify how people depend upon, adapt to, and modify the physical environment.
- Describe how places and environments may have influenced people and events over time.

Reading and Writing

- Read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources.

How do you proceed?

1. Unpacking the Standards The *overarching understandings* or big idea could be as follows:

There are basic needs in all societies, past and present, such as food, clothing, shelter, communication, transportation, government, and so on.

We can interpret how people lived in the past by analyzing artifacts and pictures and see the *changes* that have occurred in time.

You could also name the important concepts and skills that will be developed in this unit.

2. Designing the Assessment(s) Using West Virginia's standards, you must now decide what assessment you will use to determine whether your students have achieved the standards. You think that having the students produce a community almanac is a good idea. This will also fit in with literacy needs and use other standards for the social studies. In effect, the product, the community almanac, will be the assessment tool of how well students have achieved these specific history standards as well as other standards.

You have to make some additional decisions about the unit. First, you decide to limit the comparison in your community to 1940 to the present. Otherwise, the students may be confused. Choosing 1940 compared to the present also allows you to get data (maps, newspapers, and so on) more easily than for earlier periods. Using 1940 as a benchmark means also that students can interview older, long-term community members to gain data.

You also have to articulate or make clear the *criteria* or rubric that will be used to evaluate student work/performance. *Rubrics* are clearly described performance levels for student tasks. Typically, there are four levels in using a rubric. In other words, Level 1, the lowest level for this unit, means that a student(s) did not complete the project, made almost no effort for the assignment, and produced a minimum amount of work. For Level 4, the highest level, students successfully wrote two or three pages of well-organized paragraphs and photographs describing their significance (more on rubrics in Chapter 4).

3. Design the Activities to Ensure Learning for All Students What activities will have to be done to achieve these standards? Students will learn that an almanac is a publication of miscellaneous information. You will share with them samples of different almanacs such as *The World Almanac* and *The Farmer's Almanac.* In addition, you need to write to parents that their help is needed for the community almanac project with photographs of their family and the community. Students then will be divided into groups and each group will produce two or three pages, including photographs, about their topic for the community almanac.

In Table 2.2 are some topics and in parentheses are concepts that students will use to compare the changes from 1940 to the present. Although the students will all have learning experiences in history as they compare the changes from 1940 to the present, you can see that students in this unit will also learn about other social studies standards and concepts as well as literacy skills. Another alternative is a podcast as the assessment. Thus, starting with selecting a specific standard and then choosing the type of assessment will lead into the topical development of the curriculum and instruction for this unit.

Table 2.2 Compare 1940 to the Present

1940	Present
Immigration (migration)	
Land Use (human–land relationships)	
Food Produced (economics)	
Transportation (economics, technology)	
Businesses (economic systems)	
Clothing (culture)	
Recreation (culture)	
Homes and Appliances (culture, human and environmental relationships)	
Time Line of Important National and International Events Such as World War II (change)	

Let us review the steps we made in this example.

1. *Standard Number and Description* (in some states more description is given). Unpack the standard. What are the major understandings outlined in the standard.
2. *Essential Key Concepts and Skills for This Standard.* The most important concepts are change, a history concept, and community, a civics concept. Skills include research skills for gathering a variety of primary sources for student topics, reading maps, interpreting photographs, constructing time lines, using the Yellow Pages to find specific types of businesses, working cooperatively in groups, and writing.
3. *Secondary or Optional Topics for This Standard.* Economic and geography standards are also used for the student topics, such as location, land use, and the relationships among geographic factors, available resources, and transportation in determining how people make a living.
4. *Interdisciplinary Opportunities/Connection.* Strong connection with writing.
5. *Activities for Student Learning.* Lesson plans with resources plus getting feedback on how students are doing
6. *Review of What Student Learning Has Occurred.* Use data from assessment to give feedback to students. Is any reteaching needed? Gaps in students' understanding?

What seems the hardest step? Often it is breaking down a standard and planning the assessment. Let look at another example to further break down a standard by taking California's state standard 5.5, "The Causes of the American Revolution," which could be used when U.S. history is taught. The overarching understanding could be as follows:

Economic, political and social differences may lead to conflict.

Essential Questions

1. How did economic interests influence the revolution?
2. How did politics influence the revolution?
3. In what ways did individuals influence the revolution?

What assessment(s) will be used by students to demonstrate their understandings of the standard/essential questions? The key understandings and skills could be as follows:

1. Students will identify and explain key events and people leading up to and during the revolution.
2. Students will identify loyalists and patriots and explain their beliefs.
3. Students will analyze the Declaration of Independence for its core ideals

What assessment could be used? Some that are tied into the above three understandings and skills are presented below. Always check with a pretest what students already know.

1. Make a timeline of key events and people. After reading a chapter of historical fiction on the American Revolution, students record what is happening to the protagonist coordinated with a timeline.
2. Role-play loyalist and patriot viewpoints on the Boston Tea Party.

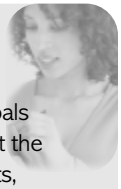
3. Write a statement of independence from something, someone, or a group. This could be an actual situation or one made up. Include four parts: introduction, beliefs, wrongs, final decision.

You can see that many learning activities could flow from the planning done for the all students.

Of course, some districts will request even more detail. Examine the Los Angeles Unified School District guidelines (Table 2.3). Whew! After glancing at the Los Angeles Unified School District's standards-based instruction model, do you want to teach there? It will take time to design an instructional unit using this standards-based instruction model. However, with such detailed planning and sharp focus, there is also a much better chance that the students will learn more. Note that this model is a combination of new ideas about standards and assessment with the older practice of instructional objectives using clearly defined verbs (e.g., student *will identify* . . . or student *will compare* . . .). In some schools, specific state standards are used instead of objectives. This appears to be a growing trend. However, realize that standards-based practices mean different things to different people. Furthermore, different states' standards have different emphases for their content standards.

On Your Own 2.3

Students Need to Know the Standard?



Especially in schools defined as "failing," principals and other trainers have asked that teachers post the standard that they are teaching and that students, when asked, know the standard. In a few cases, students actually write the number of the standard on their assignments. Why is this being done? Do you think this is a good idea? ●

Table 2.3 Los Angeles Unified School District

Guidelines for Developing a Standards-Based Instruction Model
1. *Culminating Task/Assignment for a standard.* What will the individual student produce to demonstrate achievement of the standard(s)? Begin the task with a verb. The student *will* . . .
2. *Assessment.* What criteria or rubric will be used to evaluate/score student work/performance of the culminating task? The statement of the product to be scored is followed by a verb. Task to be scored by four levels (highest score to lowest score).
3. *Instructional Activities.* What learning activities will the student be involved in to acquire content knowledge and skills to achieve the standard? Consider alternative strategies and modifications to promote equal access for all learners. Begin each learning activity with a verb describing what the student is to do.
4. *Time.* How much time will be required for the student to complete each of the activities?
5. *Resources.* What materials, textbooks, supplies, documents, and so on will support the student doing each instructional activity?

Source: Model developed, refined, and field-tested by Task Force on Standards-Based Instruction (no date).

Treasury of Resources and Technology for Planning

You probably have already gathered some resources for your unit. However, it is helpful to try to especially locate the following resources to help with better planning of your social studies program.

Student, Parent, and Family Resources

Because the social studies are about people, students and their families can often be used as resources. A grandmother may be able to tell what it was like to live on a farm fifty years ago. A parent may be able to describe his or her job when the class is studying community workers or the job market. A student may have lived in another part of the country or the world. There may be artifacts from different nations in the homes of students that would be of interest to the class. Many teachers find that these resources add sparkle to the class. Use special events such as open house and media presentations by the class to talk to and ask for help from parents. Try newsletters or e-mails to parents outlining what is going to be covered in the coming social studies unit and asking if they can help in any way.

Community Resources

The community is the neighborhood beyond the family. There are three important community resources: local publications, field trips, and guest speakers. Use the community as a resource for field trips, especially if the students are able to walk to see something such as the local bakery or police station. If this is not feasible, resource people from the community (e.g., probation officers or park rangers) can come to the classroom. Community resources can also include free local newspapers or materials from the local bank or other community institutions, especially government agencies. In particular, community programs such as Healthy Start, After School Partnerships, Healthy Kids, and School-Health Connections desire more cooperation and attention from the school in their goal to improve the health of all children.

Your school may also have a partnership arrangement with a local company or institution such as the local college or university. This can be an important resource because the partnership often provides funds, tutors, and other resources. Explore in what ways the partnership could help your class. To be successful, however, partnerships must be a two-way street. Both sides need to contribute. Students should not just be on the receiving side. For example, can the teacher and the students put together a short musical performance or skit for the other half of the partnership? Communication with the partner as well as parents can also be increased by e-mail and websites of the school or the individual class.

In addition, students can serve the community in projects ranging from helping senior citizens to cleaning up local parks. Community service provides a bridge between students and the community and can be an important resource in building toward the goal of citizenship (see Chapter 8). Be certain to clear such projects with your school principal.

Computer Resources

TECHNOLOGY

More and more teachers are using the Internet for ideas, units, and lesson plans. **Teacher portals** with their repositories of lesson plans, assignments, and links are becoming more popular even though some include advertising and fees.

Blue Web'n	www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/bluewebn
The Internet Public Library	www.ipl.org
The Gateway to Educational Materials	www.thegateway.org
MarcoPolo	www.marcopolo-education.org
One Stop Research	www.nationalgeographic.com/onestop

For educators, the leading computer journal is *Learning & Leading with Technology,* produced by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). In addition, they publish many helpful general resources, such as *Resources for Assessment* or *Multidisciplinary Units for Prekindergarten Through Grade 2* (www.iste.org/bookstore). Check if your media center subscribes to this journal or has some of their publications. This organization also has the most widely accepted computer literacy standards for students. These standards can be divided into three main areas:

1. *Basic skills or operations.* Use a word processor, use e-mail, use developmentally appropriate multimedia encyclopedias, find pertinent reliable data and information, use technology systems and software responsibly, operate equipment such as a VCR, audiotape player, DVD player, and interactive books.
2. *Critical thinking skills.* Select and evaluate information resources; distinguish between fact, opinion, and point of view; evaluate accuracy, relevance, appropriateness, and bias.
3. *Construction skills.* Use a variety of media and formats to communicate information and ideas effectively, prepare publications, apply problem solving and decision making to tasks.

When using computer and related resources, keep these student literacy standards in mind.

Video Clips If your school/district can afford it, using commercial services that offers thousands of educational videos and video clips on demand is very convenient to quickly find a video clip on the Statue of Liberty or archaeological sites of ancient Egypt. It is even better if the video can be projected directly on a whiteboard. By pausing, students can then identify the important details. Free video clips are available from The History Channel (www.historychannel.com) and other sources, often public institutions such as universities.

If you are not as fortunate to have commercial services, you need to look carefully at the videos, photographs, slides, and television series that can be obtained in your district. Typically, the sooner your order is placed, the better will be your chance of securing the items because other teachers also may want to use these resources. These media, especially with visual components, can add meaning to otherwise abstract ideas that a teacher's voice

cannot provide. Technology such as the digital versatile disc (DVD) or digital video disc is also becoming more available, adding an additional resource to enrich your teaching.

Free or inexpensive posters and other materials may be obtained from the consulates of foreign nations in large U.S. cities. Order the materials as early in the school year as possible to allow time for shipment, and make arrangements well in advance for speakers, especially those on tight schedules, such as government officials.

Current Events/Current Affairs

The social studies are unique among elementary-school subjects because they deal with events that are continually happening in the local community and the wider world that have an impact on students and their families. Often these events are directly relevant to what you are trying to achieve in your social studies program. The goal of encouraging social participation in community affairs should lead you to consider how current events can be used to enrich the social studies program.

Weekly papers, prepared by publishers at the appropriate reading levels for students in different grades, can be helpful. But in real life, newspapers, magazines, and television are not as neatly balanced and objective as educational products, and students eventually need to become familiar with regular news reports. In addition, students living in an environment dominated by television must understand what the news reporters on television are talking about. Discussions on television are often incomplete. Students need more background to understand the issues. Also, television news is frequently weak on analysis. Students need to understand how all elements of the mass media including the Internet are important and be able to analyze the messages that are being given and received.

TECHNOLOGY

All these elements make the social studies unique among subject areas and should be part of your consideration in planning. See Chapter 8 for more detail on teaching current events/current affairs.

Units

A **unit** is the unifying structure focus on which lessons and assessments are prepared. Basically it is time allocated to teaching a major subdivision in the year's course. The unit is a plan that organizes a sequential progression of lessons related in theme, topic, issue, or problem, as well as how assessment will be handled. Typically, a social studies unit covers the main concepts of a particular subject area. In addition, the unit has provisions for teaching skills, values, and, if possible, social participation. A unit consists of three parts: (1) an introductory activity designed to activate students' prior knowledge and to stimulate interest; (2) a series of sequenced lesson plans; and (3) one or more culminating activities that reinforce, bring closure to the unit, and allow students to demonstrate what they have learned. Using this planning model, teachers can determine student strengths and weaknesses in the context of daily learning activities rather than waiting for the unit test/assessment.

Why do experts recommend teaching in units? Students learn less if on Monday they have a map exercise on latitude and longitude, on Tuesday they have a value exercise on twenty things they love to do, on Wednesday they visit their local fire department, on

Thursday they read their social studies textbook on American Indian tribes in the northeastern part of the United States, and on Friday they study current events. Each lesson may be worthwhile by itself, but the lessons do not build sequentially. A unit should tie skills and knowledge together under a theme so that learning is not isolated and fragmented. Learning is more likely to take place when topics are not fragmented or isolated. Learning takes place when we introduce a unit, have a progression of lessons to develop a theme, and conclude with an activity. We can characterize the many different types of units as textbook units, commercial units, and teacher-prepared units.

Textbook Units

Textbook units are found in most texts in use today. Almost all social studies textbooks are organized by major units such as *Africa Today* or *The New Nation Faces Many Problems.* There are usually several big units in the book and under each unit are several chapters. Then within each chapter are several daily lessons. The publishers generally predict or project a given time for how long a unit will last and offer many suggestions for teaching or enriching the unit. Probably the greatest advantage to using the units in the textbook is that they reduce the amount of planning a teacher needs to do, especially if the teacher's background in the content is not strong or current. However, we should use textbooks with caution. Some students may not be able to read the textbook, or they may find the concepts are described too briefly, making the ideas seem artificial and abstract. Often the textbook's lessons and chapters are written in a repetitive format, requiring students to read and answer questions posed by the textbook. The students' reaction: boring, boring, boring. With few hands-on experiences or discussion of the topics, the social studies program is lackluster.

Textbook units cannot accomplish every aspect of planning in the classroom. Specifically, they may cause teachers to make the following instructional errors:

- Teacher makes all the decisions on what will be learned and when.
- All students must learn the same body of knowledge despite individual differences, prior learning, culture, and disabilities.
- Students do not always understand the purpose of an assignment.
- Texts may encourage fragmented connections with other subject areas.
- Content is not connected with students' interests and experiences.
- Texts may encourage the teachers to ask lower-level factual questions based only on the textbook.
- Texts may not focus on changes and problems in the students' real-life community.
- Students will see social studies as just facts and figures from a textbook.
- Texts may not be related to state and local standards.

Commercial Units

Commercial units are similar to textbook units but are prepared by a specific group. For example, the Anti-Defamation League has prepared workbook units with the objective of reducing bias and discrimination in our society. Professional organizations also make units available for a fee. The National Center for History in the Schools (University of California,

Los Angeles, CA, 90024-4108, FAX: 310-825-4723) sells units developed by teachers who have spent a summer developing and then trying out units.

Often these commercial units are designed by teachers or consultants who are trying to meet a special curriculum need or a desire of the sponsoring group to get its point of view into the classroom. For example, since 9/11, the war in Iraq, and changes in population, new state curriculum directions may ask sixth-grade teachers to cover Islam, a topic that has rapidly achieved high interest and importance. Many experienced teachers would feel unprepared to teach a unit on Islam or other unfamiliar topics. Although websites do offer lessons on current issues, they may not have enough content and skills for a unit. Teachers are often willing to pay or have the district pay for a unit that can specifically help them to include a topic new to them in their program. Buying commercial units is common in the teaching of novels, especially classics such as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Little House on the Prairie.* Groups such as those trying to introduce more economic education into the curriculum may find one of the easiest ways to do so is to produce a unit that teachers can immediately implement.

Commercial units, often free, are also produced by associations or companies with the goal of exposing students indirectly to the organization's ideas. Organizations ranging from the Dairy Council to the National Association of Newspaper Editors and the National Rifle Association produce units and free or inexpensive instructional materials. For example, Procter & Gamble for years has produced social studies units on ecology, the economy, and advertising. These free materials may include reproducible lessons, videos, teaching tips for each lesson, and colorful posters. A teacher, of course, needs to be aware that a given company may be introducing subtle bias into the unit and should carefully alert students to the source of the data. Commercially sponsored units or kits are especially common in the areas of nutrition, the environment, and the economy.

Teacher-Prepared Units

Teachers can develop or adopt from a variety of resources to organize their own units. Unlike the typical textbook or commercial units, **teacher-prepared units** can be based on the concepts, generalizations, and themes generated by the social sciences. For example, economics focuses on how individuals and groups use the resources available to them. Therefore, both individuals and groups make economic decisions every day. Using this major economic generalization, a teacher can ask primary students to keep track of what they spend their money on during a given time period. Then they can classify which expenditures were for goods and which ones were for services. Which is the larger category? Children often see their parents paying by check, credit card, or money when they buy goods, but they seldom see them pay for the dentist, and they are even less likely to realize that their families pay indirectly through taxes for public services such as those given by teachers or other employees of the schools. Children can be asked to list people who provide services that are paid for by taxes. Shifting from services to goods, students can classify the materials that were used to produce the goods they purchased, such as candy bars, or the tools that workers used to deliver services. For example, what resources are needed to make candy or bread? Another resource is time. How are students spending their time when they are out of school? What choices are they making? What are the implications of their research? What do the data reveal about themselves and their community? This one economic

generalization can lead to a variety of interesting lessons focused on the children's lives while also helping the children make sense of the complex world in which they live. Most textbook or commercial units would not be as focused on the lives of the students and their communities as would be possible with a teacher-made unit.

Teachers can experience several advantages from making their own units:

- Having a sense of ownership and pride in the unit if it is successful
- Integrating the curriculum easily across subject areas because the teacher knows what will be taught during the rest of the day and can link subject areas
- Individualizing the unit to match students' abilities and experiences
- Using the teacher's own talents and experiences
- Using local community resources

Other Teacher-Made Units

TECHNOLOGY

Check with the website of your state's department of education. Many states have online units as well as lesson plans. For example, the California Department of Education has course models for teachers in grades 1 through 12 keyed to the California state standards (www.history.ctaponline.org) Another source of teacher-made units are WebQuests (Chapter 5), a problem solving inquiry that mostly uses resources from the Internet. Both your state's department of education resources and the WebQuests, found on the Internet, are free of charge.

Integrated Curriculum/Interdisciplinary Thematic Units

How Common Is an Integrated Curriculum? What is an integrated curriculum? Definitions may vary but an **integrated curriculum** cuts across the subject areas or academic disciplines. It is a combination of two or more subjects areas. An integrated curriculum tends to go beyond the typical textbook treatment for a given subject area. The most likely pattern is targeting social studies and reading/language arts as a successful combination for student learning (more in Chapter 10). *This curriculum pattern is especially advocated now when social studies is being crowded out of the curriculum.* The rationale for integration is that since students need to read, why not have them read social studies content. In this manner, social studies is taught but it also strengthens reading, writing, and communication skills. However, the opposite viewpoint is that reading and math as skills subjects need to be taught separately since reading and math are tested whereas an integrated curriculum is not.

How commonly is social studies taught as an integrated subject? A national survey of elementary teachers showed the vastly differing patterns at different grade levels (Table 2.4). In general, the second grade had the most integrated social studies programs whereas the eighth grade had the least. In the eighth grade, social studies is most often taught as a separate subject since it is most likely taught in a departmentalized setting and not in a self-contained classroom.

Interdisciplinary thematic units typically try to combine history and the social sciences with other academic subjects such as science, literature, music, arts, and other areas. An interdisciplinary thematic unit has a theme (or concept or generalization) that organizes the learning around central ideas. Thus, in an integrative social studies unit, reading/

Table 2.4 Amount of Integration at Different Grade Levels, as Percentages

	Grade 2	Grade 5	Grade 8
Stand-alone	18	37	67
Partially integrated	54	49	27
Mostly integrated	27	14	6

Source: Modified from Question 27 in James S. Leming, Lucien Ellington, and Mark Schub, *Social Studies in Our Nation's Elementary and Middle Schools: A National Random Survey of Social Studies Teachers' Professional Opinions, Values, and Classroom Practices,* p. 67. (Storrs, CT: The Center for Survey Research and Analysis, 2006).

language arts and mathematics are not seen as ends in themselves but should become tools students use to study the social studies content. Thus, some skill development in these subjects flows from the tools needed in the unit, such as reading the text or reference books and newspapers, leading to a more natural sequence of instruction. Thus, advocates of integrated curriculum want to avoid the compartmentalization in which subjects are taught without students making connections about what they are learning. In other words, too often the science unit on plants or energy is not related to what students are learning about pioneer families' food production and their preparation of food. In addition, integration helps to cut down the "bloated curriculum" of the many different subject areas. Advocates say it provides a way young children learn naturally.

In an interdisciplinary approach, subjects are interwoven instead of being taught as separate subjects at different times of the day. This approach also goes by a variety of other names: *curriculum integration, integrated curriculum, interdisciplinary curriculum, thematic instruction, multidisciplinary teaching,* and *integrated studies.* The terms *integrated curriculum* and *integrated instruction* are also used interchangeably. All of these terms and synonyms refer to a way of planning and teaching so that the separate disciplines are brought together in a meaningful unit.

Concerns about Integrated Curriculum Critics such as Brophy and Alleman[3] have raised questions about whether curriculum integration is a boon or a threat to social studies. They are concerned that social studies goals get lost in the process of integration and academic content is trivialized. In particular, important content is not taught when students read a literature book about an immigrant family or the Civil War and, thus, students do not have the background to understand why the historical events in the book are occurring. In other words, sometimes in practice an integrated curriculum often avoids difficult content and low-quality learning experiences are the result.

Another concern about integrated curriculum is that it leads to confusion on the part of students because they only partly understand the various subject disciplines introduced. For

[3]Jere E. Brophy, and Janet Alleman, "Is Curriculum Integration a Boon or a Threat to Social Studies?" *Social Education* 57, no. 6 (1993): 287–291.

example, in studying Benjamin Franklin, students may not understand enough about electricity to appreciate Franklin's experiments with electricity or have enough background in U.S. history to comprehend Franklin's important roles before and during the American Revolution and his crusade in later life against slavery. He was just someone flying a kite during a storm. In some classrooms, Franklin might be best studied with the emphasis on the historical period.

These criticisms of integrated curriculum are worth taking seriously. There is little research presently on student learning from integration. The whole point of an integrated unit is how students' learning can best be encouraged. Does this happen most of the time? For example, a fifth-grade class studied a unit on the American Revolution by reading theme literature, but the students could not tell which side was victorious in the American Revolution. It did not appear that the students learned much about history. A strong argument can be made that each discipline or school subject has important contributions to make to student learning and that an integrated unit is not always desirable.

These comments emphasize that during a given year all units do not have to be integrated or need to be taught as separate subjects. Professional judgment is necessary to evaluate when it is best to integrate a unit and how much integration is needed. Good interdisciplinary thematic units have many advantages if they are well thought out and result in high student interest and achievement. Normally in the social studies some degree of reading, listening, and writing is found. These skills then can be infused into the social studies unit. In many cases, social studies is the most logical area for integration of a theme. Reading/language arts as well as art and drama are often easily incorporated into an interdisciplinary thematic unit. But at times it is artificial to try to integrate a subject or subjects into a theme and the results are a jumbled mess in terms of students losing sight of what the theme or central idea is.

How are thematic units put together? In practice, units are integrated in varying degrees—ranging from some that are barely blended to completely integrated units with no subject boundaries.

Designing Integrated Units Let us look at a possible primary grade topic: transportation. A common standard might be "Study transportation today (and in the past)." The major theme or generalization is that transportation is moving people or things from one place to another.

Sometimes changing the theme into a question makes planning easier. What kinds of transportation exist in the world today? By brainstorming ideas that fit this broad question, you will develop a list of concepts, definitions, and questions relating to the theme. Here are some possibilities:

Animals that provide transportation

People power, such as walking

Machines that provide transportation

Transportation on land, air, and water; different kinds; classification

Why it is important to have good transportation

Safety; roads and highways; traffic rules and signs

What is a vehicle? A wheeled vehicle?

What makes a vehicle run or go?

Trucks

Trains

Some teachers like to think in terms of subjects. How might art contribute to the theme? Science? Math? Language arts? More teachers are now using the four basic social science disciplines found in their state standards to guide their planning.

History: What was transportation like long ago?

Civics: What are the government regulations/rules for different types of transportation? Safety rules? Taxes for roads and highways?

Economics: How much does it cost to go to the same place by car, bus, taxi, and so on? What jobs are found in transportation?

Geography: What geographic features cause difficulties for building transportation systems?

The next step is to look over these ideas and questions. Which ones seem logically connected with each other? Drawing these connections on a large sheet of paper using the technique of concept mapping will help you visualize ways that topics can be linked and sequenced. Once the topics or questions are diagrammed, the next step is to focus on what objectives you wish to achieve from the unit. They might be as follows:

1. Students will identify examples of transportation on land, air, and water (a content objective).
2. Students will create a graph of the different types of transportation their families use within a week (a skill objective).
3. Students will give reasons why it is important to have a transportation system in their community (content and appreciation objective).

Once the objectives are sketched, the next task is to think of all the learning activities and resources that will help develop each objective. Trade books, songs, tapes, and records need to be surveyed as a first step. You can then list other resources and activities:

- Possible guest speakers such as pilots and animal control officers
- Class surveys of different transportation used by students
- Field trips to airports and truck depots to see these systems in operation
- Observation and discussion of correct ways of crossing streets
- Figuring out distances to school
- Getting lost, or the value of helpful maps

You can add a lot more. The difficulty usually comes in deciding when to stop and selecting the ideas you will use.

This type of unit would have the usual introductory activities as well as a final culmination activity. The learning activities and resources come from a variety of academic areas. With no artificial divisions between time periods in the classroom, students can put together

and reconstruct their own ideas more easily. Students can express their ideas through dramatization, writing projects, visual arts, or music. Assessment and evaluation could include portfolios of student-produced projects, observations, as well as paper-and-pencil tests.

The formal process for developing interdisciplinary thematic units can be summarized in a few logical steps:

1. Select a standard/theme/important idea.
2. Brainstorm different ideas, activities, and resources that fit the theme.
3. Formulate unit objectives.
4. Locate resources.
5. Organize activities that allow students to make connections among ideas and experiences.
6. Evaluate and assess progress and achievement (may be done throughout the unit).

The sample unit plan "Grasslands: A National Resource" is an example of how the NCSS geography theme/standard, People, Places, and Environments, used Grasslands as an interdisciplinary unit. One key concept for the students to learn is *region,* an area with one or more common characteristics or features that give it a measure of unity and make it different from surrounding areas.

Look carefully at this briefly sketched unit. Do you like it? Is it a good interdisciplinary unit? Its strengths are that the assessment is built into the learning experiences and is not divorced from it. There is also a beginning (providing background), a middle (with numerous sequenced activities), and a final culminating experience.

The designer of this unit, a teacher from Colorado, used Colorado as one of the two regions of grasslands. You might want to use the common characteristics of the region in which your students live and make some comparison with a similar or different region. Some teachers have used different regions of their own state. You can identify the animal and plant life indigenous to your region, or the products your region produces and where they are marketed. Perhaps you may want more time to show that regions change or that a region has common characteristics. Or you may want to include more group work or to use photographs to describe ways in which your local area has changed. Note that any teacher can modify and emphasize different key ideas in the concept of region in this unit, especially through the selection of resources and materials.

Small Group Work 2.2

Identify Academic Disciplines and Skills in Grasslands

1. Make a list of the disciplines (science, art, and so on) that appear to be used in each activity and assessment.
2. Write down the skills that are developed in each activity and assessment.
3. Each group member should decide if this is a good interdisciplinary unit. ●

UNIT PLAN

Grasslands: A Natural Resource

Overview

Grasslands are the world's best places to grow food. Grasslands have less than 20 inches of rain per year. Getting food becomes a problem as our population increases and land is plowed under to make room for people. This unit teaches about two grasslands (in Colorado and in Kenya) and ends with the class analyzing the future of one of the earth's most precious natural resources.

NCSS Themes/Standards

Culture (1) and Geography (3)

Integration

Social studies, science, language arts, art

Activities

1. Utilize a number of books/resources about the grasslands to provide background knowledge.
2. Begin dioramas that will be used in assessment. Plant grasses from Colorado prairie and Kenya savanna NOW so these will be growing at assessment time.
3. Review concepts of region. Discuss if grasslands are a region. Use primary atlases to investigate if (and where) grasslands are found on various continents.
4. Using a variety of resources, identify and analyze past and present use of both grassland areas. Develop a chart or graphic organizer to display information gathered.
5. Investigate what food products come from grasses.
6. Investigate and analyze how weather and climate affect grasslands in these two areas.
7. Discuss present use of both areas and theorize on the future. Discuss conservation/preservation practices.
8. Do the treasure map activity that takes students through a grassland to practice map skills.

Assessments

1. The task is to make the previously planted container into a recognizable ecosystem by adding plants, animals, people, homes, etc., in some art form. Each diorama is to be divided in half, to show both past and present.
2. Present diorama to class and justify contents orally using information gathered in this unit. Weather and climate are factors to be discussed. State why grasslands are a "region."

Source: Abridged version of a unit for grades 1–5 by Janet Pommrehn, Denver Public Schools Elementary Teacher.

What are some sources of themes? Besides traditional themes such as transportation, the American Revolution, and the environment from content areas, sources might include biographies, local events and history, world events, or family histories. Teachers have successfully used such themes as Egyptian mummies, architecture of a given community, or a book such as *Sarah, Plain and Tall.* Popular primary themes are foods, friends, grandparents, folktales, and famous people. Themes for the middle grades might focus on immigration, courage, and prejudice. Themes could be selected by the teacher or could emerge from the experiences and current needs of students.

Beginners often ask how long a unit should last. There is no fixed answer to this question, but younger students probably profit more from shorter units, perhaps two or three weeks, and older students gain more from units that are longer, up to six weeks. If the unit goes on too long, students may lose interest. Some teachers, however, find that students beg for more after interesting units, such as the economic simulation called *Mini-Society,* which lasts a full six weeks. The ideal time depends both on the age of the students and the material being taught.

Units may vary in length depending on how many other areas of the curriculum are included in them. A social studies unit that incorporates art, music, literature, and science usually lasts longer than one that includes no other disciplines. In planning a unit, try to incorporate as many relevant curriculum areas and skills as possible.

Two Units on Hawaii

Now let us look in more detail at some other units. Units about states may include the following NCSS themes/standards: Culture (1); Time, Continuity, and Change (2); and People, Places, and Environments (3).

Elizabeth A. Gelbart reported about the unit "Travel Day to Hawaii," which she had designed, at a social studies conference.[4] In addition to the previous outline, Gelbart provided ten pages describing in more detail worksheets with topics such as "A Hawaiian Volcano Erupts."

The sample unit plan "Travel Day to Hawaii" has many strengths; many classes would learn from and enjoy it, especially the final day's culmination activity. Check how assessment is handled. Does it flow naturally from the activities? But there is one serious concern: Is the unit reinforcing stereotypes about Hawaii? Will students learn about the large city of Honolulu with its wide diversity of people? Will students find out about the problems Hawaii is facing today as its land usage changes? The unit focuses on the tourist

On Your Own 2.4

Analyze the Unit

In the sample unit plan "Travel Day to Hawaii," are the theme and content appropriate for the age group? Are there provisions for teaching skills and values? Is there a variety of activities for the children? Is there integration with other subject areas of the curriculum? Do you think the class would enjoy the unit? Is there a progression of experiences and activities that leads to a culmination in the unit? ●

[4]Elizabeth A. Gelbart, "Travel Day to Hawaii." Presented at the California Council for the Social Studies Conference (Los Angeles, 1986).

UNIT PLAN

Travel Day to Hawaii

The following unit is planned to last one week and is prepared for the primary grades. Usually, such a unit has a broad objective and specific daily objectives. Although it might be inappropriate to use verbs such as *know, value,* and *understand* in behavioral objectives for individual lessons, such words are appropriate at the beginning of a unit where they provide overall guidance and organization to the instructional process.

NCSS Themes/Standards

Culture (1), History (2), and Geography (3)

Unit Goals

1. Students will understand the geography, history, and traditional culture of Hawaii.
2. Students will identify different types of transportation.

Day 1

Objectives: Students will distinguish an island from a land mass.
Students will describe their experiences about Hawaii.
Students will draw the Hawaiian Islands.

1. Introduce the vocabulary term *island.* Brainstorm with the class: What is an island? Have the children look at a map of the United States and find a state that is a group of islands.
2. Discuss the history of Hawaii. Share past experiences of children or their parents who have visited there.
3. Tell the children that the class will go on a "pretend" trip to Hawaii in five days. Discuss different modes of transportation.
4. Draw the islands on brown butcher paper and label them according to shape. Have the children pin up the product on the bulletin board with a blue background for water.

Day 2

Objectives: Students will differentiate the various types of transportation.
Students will calculate distances from their state to Hawaii.

1. Brainstorm with the children as to the different ways the class could travel to Hawaii (airplane, ship, sailboat, etc.).
2. Design an airplane ticket. Include the date, time of departure, and so on.

Day 3

Objective: Students will describe the traditional cultures and history of Hawaii.

1. Read "Palm Tree" from *Young Folks Hawaiian Time.*
2. Discuss the term *luau,* as well as foods usually eaten, dances, and so on.
3. Have children make drawings of Hawaiian traditions for a mural.
4. Learn the hula from a community member.

UNIT PLAN continued Travel Day to Hawaii

Day 4

Objective: Students will depict the sequence of volcano formation.

1. Brainstorm the term *volcano.* Discuss how volcanoes formed the islands.
2. Have the children divide paper into four squares. Illustrate an eruption of a volcano in sequence.

Day 5

Objective: Students will simulate a travel day in Hawaii. This lesson plan is part of a full day's activity: a "pretend" in-classroom flight to another state. Hawaii is used as an example in this lesson, but other states or nations could be used as well. This travel day combines all subjects in a *fun* educational setting. The following is an example of such a day.

1. "Takeoff"
   a. Collect children-made airplane tickets at the door.
   b. Review the flight route (ocean to be flown over, etc.).
2. Math-macaroni leis
   a. Design a simple count pattern (two reds, one yellow, and repeat) with dyed macaroni and construction-paper flowers. Save for the luau.
   b. Count the number of leis made.
3. Language/letter-writing skills
   a. Write and design a postcard to a friend or family member.
   b. Discuss how to address a postcard, the purpose of a stamp, and how to use descriptive language.
4. Reading/vocabulary skills
   a. Share "Hawaiian Alphabet" from *Young Folks Hawaiian Time.*
   b. Complete a worksheet on Hawaiian terms.
   c. List terms in alphabetical order.
5. Science: parts of flowers
   a. Label a hibiscus flower.
   b. Discuss the climate needed for it to grow and the stages of plant growth in general.
6. Art and music
   a. Learn the hula and Hawaiian folktales.
   b. Design a scrapbook of the day's events. Draw scenes of Hawaii with brief written descriptions.
7. Social studies: culture and foods of Hawaii
   a. Finish with a luau in Hawaii. Poi, coconut, and pineapple juice are a few suggested foods to share. The children should eat with their fingers.
   b. "Reboard" for the return flight home.

world of Hawaii. Attractive as that may be, it is not the whole picture. Note that the basic plan of this unit could be used for other nations or even states within the United States, but a teacher must be certain that students understand there is more to a region than the tourist view.

Let us now look at another unit on Hawaii, "Living in Hawaii: Now and Long Ago," using more of the **constructionist** or active learning on the part of the learner. Constructionist theory and instructional practices:

- Stress the importance of students' prior learning by asking what students already know
- Posit that learning occurs when the student is able to tie newly acquired information to previous understandings
- Organize learning and instruction around important ideas
- Challenge the adequacy of the learner's prior knowledge
- Assess a learner's knowledge acquisition during the lesson

Critiquing the Two Units

Comparison of the two units certainly shows the variety and creativity that can be developed with the same topic. Both units encourage an integration with other areas of the curriculum and use skills and content from a variety of subject areas. Both also try to make the activities interesting and meaningful for students. By comparison, both can make connections with previous units.

Both units have the power to expand student knowledge and skills. Both units could also be used to compare life in Hawaii with the student's own community or state. The uniqueness of Hawaii with other states often makes for a strong contrast.

Compared with the first unit, "Living in Hawaii: Now and Long Ago" goes beyond tourist stereotypes and pushes students beyond their first, and probably inaccurate, images of Hawaii. The second unit also fosters more respect for the daring and brave Polynesians who made the trip to Hawaii. This emphasis on the native culture and its history probably also encourages a more multicultural view of the history of Hawaii.

Are there any weaknesses in "Living in Hawaii: Now and Long Ago?" Checking your state standards might suggest that the geography focus is not as sharp as it could be. It is implied by media used in the unit that the students would learn about Hawaii's tropical climate and volcanic origins but this is not explicitly taught. In the second unit, are economic data on jobs as interesting as those in the first unit, "Travel Day to Hawaii"? Both students and the teacher might like the "Travel Day to Hawaii" unit more and this might contribute to its success.

TECHNOLOGY

But perhaps the greatest challenge (both a strength and a weakness) is that "Living in Hawaii: Now and Long Ago" requires sufficient reading skills in finding information in media and the Internet and higher-level skills in comparing now and long ago. Even with a strong media component, for some pairs the only way to find the necessary information (for example, the data on jobs) would be by reading. That is why the suggestion is given that students work in pairs, chosen by the teacher. It is hoped that one strong reader will be in each pair. In addition, "Living in Hawaii: Now and Long Ago" requires that the students become familiar with taking turns at the computer(s) and helping each other. For these reasons, this unit might be more appropriate for older primary children or children who have some skill in finding information. In addition, some pairs will finish their assigned tasks sooner than other pairs. If they finish earlier, they can be encouraged to

UNIT PLAN

Living in Hawaii: Now and Long Ago

The following one-week unit is prepared for primary grades.

NCSS Themes/Standards

Culture (1), History (2), Geography (3), and Economics (7)

Unit Goals

1. Students will understand the geography, history, and traditional culture of Hawaii (same objective as first unit, "Travel to Hawaii").
2. Students will compare the traditional Polynesian culture of Hawaii with the present (different objective compared to the first unit)

Day 1

Objectives: Students locate Hawaii on a globe.
Using a KWL chart, students tell what they know (K), want (W) to learn, and later did learn (L) on Hawaii.

1. Locate Hawaii on the globe as well as on maps. As a review, compare the location and size of Hawaii to the state where students live.
2. Ask: What do you *know* about Hawaii? Explore individual experiences.
3. Ask: What *would* you like to learn about Hawaii? Record answers.
   Although there would be a lot of variation, let us presume that the class narrowed down the "would like to know" to the following:

   A. What plants and animals are found on Hawaii today? Long ago?
   B. What jobs do workers have today? Long ago?
   C. Why do people in Hawaii do the hula?

Day 2

Objectives: Student will view a section of "Holo Mai Pele," a sixty-minute *Great Performances* video from 2001 or video clips on Hawaii.
Each pair will choose a topic.
Students will review computer skills and how to find evidence for their questions.

1. The teacher lists the following topics for investigation; students will work in pairs.

Long Ago	*Today*
Voyages of the Polynesians	Transportation
King Kamehameha I	Population/ethnic groups
Queen Liliuokalani	Cities/high cost of living
Population/social structure	Macadamia nuts
Small farms/self sufficiency	Alien plants and animals
Taro (poi)	Tourism

(continued)

UNIT PLAN continued **Living in Hawaii: Now and Long Ago**

Pigs and chickens	Imports
Sugar cane	Exports
Yams	Hula today/contests
Coconut	Military presence
Hula (chants, instruments)	Land ownership
Fish ponds	Jobs

Note that there are probably more topics (twenty-four) than student pairs. However, though some of the topics are essential for answering the questions, the easier and less important topics such as coconut and sugar cane could be omitted.

2. Teacher and students review how to use sources of information: encyclopedia, library resources, and media, including skills using the Internet. Before Day 2, the teacher has already prepared the websites on Hawaii or has printed from the Internet fact sheets on Hawaii, data from Hawaii's Agriculture Department, pictures of Hawaiian plants and animals from museums and gardens, and the like. These data are put into labeled folders for the children. In turn, children using the Internet also make an extra copy for possible use by other pairs and place them into the appropriate folders.
3. Students who need to use the Internet rotate by pairs into the computer area while the rest of the class uses library resources. If needed, the teacher (or any other available help) observes what students can do and coaches students on how to find their information for their topic. In the process of working with pairs, the teacher assesses what evidence a given pair has already found and what they have learned from the activity. The teacher keeps track of student work.

Day 3

Objectives: Students search resources and the Internet for information.
Students find evidence to answer their topic questions.

1. View a section of "Holo Mai Pele" or other videos on Hawaii.
2. Show and explain pictures from the Internet on Hawaii that students/teacher have found as well as other colorful books on Hawaii.
3. Students in pairs work on researching their topic. Teacher coaches pairs on how to find information and how they will present their data on Friday.

Day 4

Objectives: Students search resources and the Internet for information.
Students find evidence to answer their topic questions.
Students work on their presentation of their evidence.

1. Show pictures from the companion book that coordinates with the video "Holo Mai Pele."
2. Teacher coaches pairs on how they will present their data. Can they role-play whether to build more hotels on beaches? Can they role-play a Hawaiian descendent demanding land rights? Can posters be used to present the most important imports and exports? Can they perform the basic foot steps of the hula (sway, sway walk, and kahola)? Oral presentation?

UNIT PLAN continued **Living in Hawaii: Now and Long Ago**

Day 5

Objectives: Using a variety of formats, pairs will take turns presenting their evidence.
Students will complete the KWL chart.
Students will assess their own work.
Students will review what they have learned.

1. Teacher leads students in filling out the KWL chart and drawing conclusions.
2. Teacher asks if students would like to share their Hawaiian unit with another class. If affirmative, students practice using a variety of formats (role playing, hula performance, oral presentations, video segments, etc.).
3. Self-assessment by pairs on their contribution to the KWL chart and what they learned. Teacher also makes an assessment.

tackle other topics that have not already been assigned. Thus, there may be more management problems with the second unit. In addition, days with using the media and computer may be more physically demanding as the teacher moves around from one pair to another.

Notice that the two Hawaiian units used the more traditional planning model of objectives, activities, and then assessment. Given the same first unit goal—"Students will understand the geography, history, and traditional culture of Hawaii"—think how you would plan using the backward design model. You would be looking immediately at assessment before planning activities. Do you think the backward design model would contribute more to student learning?

"Living in Hawaii: Now and Long Ago" also illustrates the advantages of using the Internet for finding resources on Hawaii. It would be very unwise, however, to have young children search the Internet for general topics such as *Hawaii.* It is the teacher's responsibility to find the websites before Day 2 or print out the material from the Internet beforehand (see Figure 2.4). Before the unit starts, the teacher assembles the general resources on Hawaii but cannot anticipate whether the students will want to learn about the symbols of Hawaii (state bird, flag, state flower, state tree) or whether they want to learn more about the independent monarchy (1795–1894). Will the children want to learn more about the Hawaiian language or the USS *Arizona* Memorial that they may have visited? The second unit forces the teacher to be able to find resources quickly.

TECHNOLOGY

Note that for younger children the teacher initially found a lot of the resources for the children to use. Harder is for older students to figure out "How am I going to find out what I need to know," or in other words, how can good information be located. Often there are many sources and the student has to select the best sources of information. This requires critical thinking skills to assess the relevance and reliability of Internet-based information. Often, students rely on use visual images as being the most important in determining the meaning and significance of the information. This is often easier for them to do than to read the large amount of printed information. This means students need supervision in developing search skills and also critical thinking skills.

TECHNOLOGY

In addition, this unit, like other units, illustrates the importance of the teacher's knowledge, background, and experiences as well as those of the learners. Try to build on your own strengths. During your vacations as well as during the year, round up as many resources as possible for current and forthcoming units.

Research Computer Skills

TECHNOLOGY

Along with reading skills, the needed research skills using computers for some of the information (Figure 2.4) in the second unit make it more difficult to teach this unit. Kids get stuck! Weaker readers have even more difficulties (Chapter 10). Even after a review on how to use sources of information, the teacher may have to show students individually how to find information more effectively. If students ask questions such as whether there are poisonous snakes in Hawaii or do men do the hula, the teacher tries not to give the answer but shows the students how to find the information. This way the teacher is a guide and hopes the students will become more independent and not rely on the teacher for all of the answers.

Once students find the information, they must jot down a few words from the resources regarding pictures, text, videos, and the like. It is helpful for students to use graphic organizers to fill out information. Animals could be grouped into categories such as birds, insects, and so on.

Figure 2.4 Stages for Using a Computer for Research

1. **Teacher**
   - Locates background information for both the teacher and students.
   - Google is most popular, but often more helpful are specialized social studies aids such as One Stop Research, a website sponsored by the National Geographic Society (www.nationalgeographic.com/onestop). This site's results are organized by type: photos, art, maps, pictures, articles, video, games, and so on.
2. **Teacher to Student**
   - Gives articles, photographs, graphs, maps, books, and so on to students
   - Assign "computer assistants." Those with greater computer experience can help keep computer use moving in an efficient manner.
   - Teaching students the value of planning. Discussion and brainstorming are best done before starting research on a computer.
   - Post list of computer rights and responsibilities. Give key commands near the computer station. If necessary, use a timer and a sign-up sheet.
3. **Students and Teachers**
   - Students do research to answer their questions.
   - Information organized into a format (written, oral, and so on.)
   - Possible publication or presentations investigated.
   - Check if penpals would work. The largest free K–12 electronic penpal network is ePals Classroom exchange (www.epals.com) or KeyPals Club (www.teaching.com/keypals)

Travel Day

Having more resources available has led in some schools to a more complex form of Travel Day. It is called Passport Day when each classroom at a school represents a different country, state, or time period that students have learned about in their social studies program. For example, the sixth-grade class studied India while a third-grade class studied the American Indians in their area. Students may wear attire representative of the culture on Passport Day as they explain their work and artifacts to visitors. Students holding passports in their hands visit the different classrooms according to an arranged time schedule. Passport Day makes a good culminating experience for completion of a unit. Exchanges between classes also encourage more of a school community feeling and students may even look forward to the next grade levels when they see the results of interesting social studies units. Increasing use of computer networks should make access to teaching materials easier.

TECHNOLOGY

In some communities, the exchange is called It's a Small World or International Day. Each class studies a different country, decorates the halls, and the PTA organizes a celebration with passports, crafts, and entertainment with an International Food Tasting. This is often the highlight of the year. During the class period, each student may be given a number that signals the time for their presentation so there is no competition within a class on who is being given attention.

A more economic focus is a Bazaar Day where students sell the crafts they have made for a given culture. Typically, each entrepreneur with a team of their fellow classmates make products, often at home with the help of their families. Parents as well as the whole community are invited to the Bazaar Day where the bargaining begins. Evaluation of the project usually finds that students have gained understanding of running of business as well as understanding more about a given culture. For this type of project to be successful requires careful planning and cooperation from teachers, students, parents, and the community.

Elements of a Unit

What does a unit contain? The typical elements found in a unit are shown in Figure 2.5. No set format exists for writing units. Some teachers prefer to divide a page into three columns—the first for objectives, the middle for teaching procedures, and the third for materials. Others like to put each lesson plan on a separate page so they can eliminate or modify individual lesson plans more easily.

What criteria can be used to choose units? Here are some ideas:

- *Construction of knowledge:* Will students organize, interpret, or explain information? Will they consider different points of view and alternative solutions?
- *Thinking and other skills:* Will students use and extend their skills?
- *Value beyond school:* Will the knowledge and skills be used outside the classroom? Will citizenship skills and values be likely to increase?
- *Link to state standards:* Will the unit help students to achieve state and local standards?

Figure 2.5 Sample Unit Format

Elements of a Unit

1. Description
   Title
   Description of a grade level, target student population
   Rationale/overview for the unit; significance of topic; tie to standards
   Estimated time
2. Goals and objectives (number each for ease of referral)
3. Lessons
   Introductory and initiating activities
   Series of sequence lesson plans with enough detail on procedures so that the teaching strategies and activities are clear. Worksheets and similar handouts should be included.
   Concluding activities to encourage students to apply what they have learned
4. List of resources (textbooks, people, media, library books, speakers)
5. Assessment, including procedures used during the unit as well as tests.

On Your Own 2.5

What Are the Strengths of These Activities?

In many cases, teachers incorporate the ideas from resource units or guides into their own teaching. Do you think any of these ideas on foods are helpful? Might you incorporate them into your own unit? ●

What is the difference between units (sometimes called *teaching units*) and resource units? **Resource units** are units designed (e.g., by the Census Bureau to help teachers teach about the census) for use by a great many teachers. Districts may design a resource unit for a given topic. Usually resource units contain more ideas and activities than any one teacher can use. See, for example, the sample unit plan "Foods."

What are some special considerations that teachers should be aware of in designing and implementing units in the social studies? One is *variety.* Look at your lesson plans. Are you using the same techniques (e.g., worksheets) every day? Are you showing three videos three days in a row? Is content emphasized without consideration of the importance of skills, values, and civic education?

To spot these problems more easily, some teachers like to jot down in broad outline what they are doing throughout the course of a week. Seeing a whole week's schedule often points out the need for more variety in teaching strategies and more attention to skills and values.

After you have completed a unit, evaluate it from your students' point of view. What was their favorite activity? What did they like least about the unit? Most important, what did they learn from it?

UNIT PLAN

Food

The following resource unit, designed to promote global education, is from the *Indiana in the World* teaching activities packet.

Activities

The pupils may:

Draw a two-column chart. Head one column "Animals" and one "Plants." List in the columns the foods students eat that come from plants and animals.

Make a list of their favorite foods.

Make a collage of their favorite foods.

Make a list of junk foods.

From a list of favorite foods, categorize the foods according to the six groups of the nutritional pyramid, identifying those that qualify as junk foods.

Discuss the nutritional value of the food they eat.

List and discuss health problems that can be prevented through adequate nutrition.

Describe and discuss their individual family eating patterns and compare them with those of other members of the class.

Divide into groups, each group choosing a foreign country; research and list the foods of their chosen country.

Find pictures and make a picture chart of the foods of their chosen country.

Discuss the eating utensils of a country (e.g., chopsticks in Asia).

Visit a supermarket that features foods of many countries. List the foods that are featured from the country they are studying.

Take a field trip to a restaurant featuring food of a chosen country.

Research and make a picture story chart on the influence religion may have on the diet of a country.

Plan a balanced diet from the foods of their chosen country.

List five or more foods eaten by people of other countries. State the countries (e.g., octopus, Italy).

Research and report on the history of some foods eaten in the United States.

List some of the foods eaten in the United States that were brought here from other countries. Name the countries.

Find pictures of children suffering from malnutrition in other countries.

Research and report on the diseases prevalent in these countries because of malnutrition.

Write two story paragraphs, one explaining plankton and the other hydroponics.

Lesson Plans

A **lesson plan** is an outline of what you expect to teach in a given day's lesson. (See the daily plans in the sample unit plan "Travel Day to Hawaii" for examples.) Many teachers begin by creating and photocopying a blank form with several headings (see Figure 2.6). This form can be filled in at the beginning of each week or each unit.

Lesson plans are constructed within the general framework of a unit and should reflect the goals of that unit. You need to be alert in constructing daily plans to how activities can move your students toward an understanding of the unit's general goals—how daily activities can make those goals more meaningful. This requires a careful match between student readiness and interest and the activities you plan.

Planning for the Inclusive Classroom/Adaptations

Teachers face a diverse group of students who have a variety of learning styles and abilities. Students may have many commonalities but they also bring differences that make them individuals. Yet all students can learn. The first step is to *plan your lesson for the whole class.* Activities such as prereading and prewriting can help all students. You can also adapt your lesson plan to specific learners by pairing up students, allowing alternatives, giving more time, rewriting questions, using graphic organizers, reducing complexity, and so on. For the gifted, you may want to make the lesson more challenging. If available, use resource teachers or aides to help certain students.

Sometimes this is called **differentiating instruction.** Students in classrooms with differentiating instruction find there are multiple ways to acquire content, make sense of ideas, and then express what they have learned. The teacher is willing to modify instruction to help the diverse group of students. Typically, this means that there is a blend of whole-class instruction, small-group instruction, and individual instruction (more in Chapters 3 and 9). One important group that often needs more attention are the growing number of English language learners (ELLs), sometimes called ELs.

Almost every teacher supports the goals of differentiated instruction. The problem comes in trying to implement this important strategy. One of the most common techniques is to place students into small groups according to their abilities or readiness (more on small groups in Chapter 3). However, sometimes groups are formed on the basis of

Figure 2.6 Lesson Plan Format

Subject Area _____ Date _____

- Objective/standard
- Materials/resources
- Initiating activity/interest building
- Procedures/teaching strategies/lesson development
- Assessment
- Possible follow-up/expansion/integration

student interest. Often this arrangement involves assigning different materials to the different students or think-pairs. For example, in studying medieval Japan, individual biographies like Minamoto Yoritomo or Antoku, the boy emperor whose grandmother drowned herself and the boy to avoid being captured, are easier for challenged students. Other groups could be formed for each of the social classes: emperor, shogun, daimyo, samurai, peasants, merchants, and artisans. Or in studying the spread of Islam in West Africa, students could study Sunni Ali Ber, or Askia Muhammad, rulers of Songhai, while others study the social structure: emperor, noble families, traders, free people of towns, skilled workers, slaves.

TECHNOLOGY

As you can see from these examples, the teacher must gather up a wide variety of resources or at least check if the content is easily accessed from websites. Always give the websites to the students to avoid long searches on the Internet by students. Another difficulty is that it may take the groups different amounts of time to complete their assignments to describe each social class, especially if the data are to be put into a chart or graph. Differentiated instruction does take the time of the teacher. For this reason, one recommendation is for a teacher to start slowly, one unit at a time, to implement differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction may be more easily implemented when there are large blocks of time versus shorter periods of time.

Tips for Writing Lesson Plans

The first consideration in making a lesson plan is the objective or purpose. Is there a special concept that you hope students will acquire? The next step is motivation. What can you do to capture students' attention? This may involve relating the experiences of students to your objectives. Student interest and involvement in the lesson may be triggered by an artifact, a learning game, or a planned classroom experience.

Beginnings are important. They help to shape the motivation of students. Teachers should try to effect a smooth transition from what students already know to the new material. In general, sequence your instruction from the simple to the complex. Sometimes a brief review by a student of what was done in yesterday's social studies lesson is helpful. Try to create an organizational framework for ideas or information so that students know where things are going. It is often valuable simply to state the purpose of the lesson. Some teachers turn lessons into guessing games for their students, who must figure out where they're going and why. This generally does not help the learning process, especially for slower learners.

In writing out procedures, teachers often do not use enough detail. What does "read and discuss the textbook" mean? Read aloud? Read silently? Read one paragraph silently and then discuss? Will students discuss questions in small groups? You can see that "read and discuss the textbook" is open to a wide variety of interpretations. Often more planning could turn the lesson into an exciting and useful learning experience for the students.

During the lesson, be attentive to the responses of the students. Is there a sense of accomplishment among them? Finally, think about closure, or ending the lesson. Will you depend on the bell to close the lesson? That can leave students dangling in mid-thought. A better way is to draw attention to the end of the lesson, to help students organize their learning, and to reinforce what they have learned. Have a student summarize the lesson for the class, or do so yourself.

Small Group Work 2.3

Locating Interesting Lesson Plans

It would be exhausting to develop all your lesson plans by yourself in the area of the social studies. Look at teachers' guides, professional literature, the Internet, and resource units for ideas for lesson plans. Find three lesson plans you like. Explain why they appeal to you. See websites at the end of the chapters or use quotation marks around "social studies lesson plans in you Internet searches." ●

In summary, these are planning practices that help students to learn.

- Have clearly defined yearly, semester, unit, weekly, and daily plans.
- It is better to overplan than underplan. But be flexible.
- Start lessons with openers that relate to students' experiences or arouse their curiosity.
- The textbook is only one tool. Be careful not to overuse it.
- Use the humanities—music, art, literature—as much as possible.

Organizing and Scheduling

Time for teaching is a valuable resource. Many elementary students attend school for more than six hours a day, and the trend in the reform movement is to increase the number of minutes that elementary students spend in school. But when you subtract lunch time and recesses, most teachers probably have only about four hours a day actually to teach. Some studies show that one-third of all time is absorbed by nonteaching responsibilities.

How much time should be spent on teaching the social studies? Many school districts give recommendations. The minimum usually is fifteen minutes a day for the first grade with an increasing time allotment each year. By the fourth grade, around thirty-five minutes a day is usually recommended, and by the sixth grade, social studies usually occupies a full period of approximately forty to forty-five minutes.

These time allocations, however, presume that subjects are not integrated. Typically, first-grade language arts (reading, writing, listening, speaking, spelling, handwriting) are allotted *two to three hours* each day. This means that if you integrate different areas, such as language arts (reading stories about the culture you are studying, writing a thank-you note to a community worker who spoke to your class), you can greatly increase the number of minutes devoted to social studies instruction. Integrating science and social studies is also worthwhile; studying the geography of a given area lends itself easily to the study of that area's plants, animals, climate, and the like. Integrating social studies with music, art, dance, and drama is natural, especially when you are studying a particular culture. More middle schools are using **block scheduling,** a longer period of time.

TECHNOLOGY

When is social studies typically taught during the school day? In many schools the basic subjects, reading and math, are taught in the morning "prime-time" hours. In terms of computer use in elementary schools, there is a surge of computer activity from about 10:45 to 11:45 in the late morning before lunch. Teachers appear to only allow computer time before going to lunch and later before going home. Social studies is generally relegated to the afternoon in such programs. By integrating subjects, however, you can bring social studies content into the morning hours when students are fresher and better able to learn.

You may not have complete control over scheduling block time and subject areas. In most schools, physical education, music, art, and other such subjects are taught by specialists whose schedules will dictate part of your own scheduling. In addition, students are often grouped for reading and math and may go to different rooms for these subjects. Again, you may have to follow prescribed time allocations for such classes.

Most teachers, however, can make decisions on how to use the time available. You will probably want to set up a "normal" daily and weekly schedule. You may decide that you would rather teach social studies on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for a longer block of time than every day for a shorter period. Time allocations may change depending on the activities. A field trip or a local guest may dictate changes in the normal schedule. However, most classrooms eventually move into routine scheduled times for different subject areas or learning periods. Teachers differ on how to schedule and organize their class time. As long as time is used wisely, these differences are probably not important.

Summary

Planning is important for effective teaching. Teachers usually block out a year's social studies curriculum by determining what units will be taught during the year. The unit approach with a theme, sequential lessons, and assessment provides better learning experiences for students. Ideally, daily lesson plans should be detailed enough to make teaching of the social studies effective and interesting. Teachers also have to plan so that citizenship and multicultural education as well as other goals and skills are treated as a day-long concern (see especially Chapters 8 through 10).

Suggested Readings and Websites

Davis, James E., ed. *Planning a Social Studies Program: Activities, Guidelines, and Resources,* 4th ed. Boulder, CO: ERIC Clearing House for Social Studies/Social Science Education, Social Science Education Consortium, 1997.

Good tool for schools changing their social studies program.

Eisner, Elliot W. *The Educational Imagination.* New York: Macmillan, 1985.

Sees much of teaching as an artistic enterprise.

Fredericks, Anthony D., Anita Meyer Meinbach, and Liz Rothlein. *Thematic Units.* New York: HarperCollins, 1993.

Theory of thematic approach and examples of thematic units.

Lindquist, Tarry. *Seeing the Whole Through Social Studies.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002.

Strong on integrating learning, grades 3 through 8. See also her earlier books, *Social Studies at the Center: Integrating Kids, Content, and Literacy* (2000) and *Ways That Work: Putting Social Studies Standards into Practice* (1997), all published by Heinemann.

Roberts, Patricia, and Richard D. Kellough. *A Guide for Developing an Interdisciplinary Thematic Unit.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996.

Purposes, initiating an interdisciplinary thematic unit, developing objectives and learning experiences plus assessment.

Websites

Awesome Library K–12 Lesson Plans
www.awesomelibrary.org/social.html

Lesson plans and downloadable readings.

A Curriculum Site
http://discoveryschool.com/schrockguide

Categorized list of sites useful for the curriculum.

Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE)
http://free.ed.gov

U.S. Department of Education's website that serves as a repository of school-related resources from the federal government such as Library of Congress, Endowment for the Humanities, Smithsonian Institute, National Science Foundation, and the like. Excellent with many primary source documents and photos and also suggestions on how to teach. Probably best for upper elementary and middle schools.

Gateway to 21st Century Skills
www.thegateway.org

Thousands of educational resources of the National Education Association

Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators
http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide

Updated by topic for K–12. Useful also for ELLs.

National Center for History in the Schools
www.sscnet.ucla.edu/nchs

The National Center for History in the Schools has the national history standards and over sixty world and U.S. history teaching units of reproducible primary sources and materials. Best for fifth grade and above.

Social Studies Lesson Plans
www.csun.edu/~hcedu013

Select from the lesson plans and teaching strategies to plan classes or complete projects.

A Teachers' Website
www.teachers.net

A gathering place with lesson plans, curriculum, supplies, and chat center.

The WebQuest Page
http://webquest.sdsu.edu/webquest.html

A WebQuest is an inquiry-oriented activity in which most or all of the information is drawn from the Web.

PEARSON myeducationlab
Where the Classroom Comes to Life

VIDEO HOMEWORK EXERCISE

Opportunities for Learning

Go to MyEducationLab, select the topic **Cross Curricular Connections**, and watch the video entitled "Opportunities for Learning."

In the video, a first-grade teacher teaches a lesson integrating both math and social studies to demonstrate the importance of presenting concepts in ways that facilitate mastery by children with different learning styles.